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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000023

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: (U) DEPUTY SPEAKER ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

REF: KUWAIT 0015

Classified By: (U) DCM Frank C. Urbancic for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

1. (SBU) Summary: In a January 5 meeting Deputy Speaker Meshari al-Anjari gave his readout on recent developments in Kuwait's National Assembly, the status of a possible "grilling" of a Minister charged with corruption, and his version of a military timeline for Iraq. End Summary.

2. (C) Poloffs and Pol FSN met with Kuwaiti National Assembly Deputy Speaker Meshari al-Anjari on January 5, after a long holiday weekend during which local media had reported that MP Abdulla al-Naibari was preparing to subject one of two government ministers to parliamentary "grilling" for their role in a suspect land development deal, in which 64 square kilometers of public land were sold at rock-bottom prices to one developer, without a bidding process.

Whom to grill?

3. (C) To explain confusing news reports that either the Minister of Finance, Dr. Yousef al-Ibrahim, or Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mohammad Dheifallah Sharar would be grilled, al-Anjari said that MP al-Naibari had three choices: he could grill the Prime Minister and Crown Prince, Shaykh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah who was ultimately responsible for the deal, but not of sound health (Grilling the Crown Prince is a nonstarter given the CP's extremely poor physical and mental health, and Kuwaiti society's veneration of him), he could grill Minister al-Ibrahim, who signed the contract, or he could grill Minister Sharar. MP al-Naibari had not yet formally submitted his grilling request, but al-Anjari said it appeared the grilling would be directed towards Sharar.

4. (C) Al-Anjari hoped the matter would be dealt with shortly, because it will not go away. He said the last 6 months of every National Assembly session were "stormy," and this would be a good time for the government to resolve the issue, leaving a clean slate for the new assembly.

Elections

5. (C) The National Assembly's term expires in mid-July. Al-Anjari said the Council of Ministers had asked the Constitutional Court to confirm whether elections can be held anytime during the last two months of the term. If so, the government would want the date to be in early June; otherwise it would be in July. "We hope for June," he added.

(Comment: While seemingly insignificant, a June vs. July election could considerably impact voter turnout. By July, many Kuwaitis have left for cooler and more comfortable climes, giving the remaining voters more weight. Liberals are seen as more likely to leave Kuwait than Islamists or Tribalists. End Comment.)

Fewer Islamists after Elections

6. (C) Al-Anjari, a liberal, predicted the new assembly would include fewer Islamists, owing to a number of factors. First, he said, Kuwaiti sympathy for America had increased since 9/11/01. Second, Kuwaitis recall that during the Iraqi occupation, some Islamists (specifically, The Muslim Brotherhood) had opposed relying on the U.S., preferring to pin their hopes on "muslim armies." Third, the fact that Islamists had met with Saddam since 9/11 had not endeared them to the general population. Finally, he said, Islamists had not presented any significant legislative plan to the Assembly, but had spent much of their time on "grillings," notably that of Minister al-Ibrahim, which took place in July of 2002.

What about Iraq?

7. (C) Moving to the subject of the hour, the possibility of conflict with Saddam, al-Anjari asked if the US could prove that Saddam had WMD. PolChief responded that this would be the story of the next few weeks. Besides, any serious government knows Saddam is lying when he denies having any WMD. Al-Anjari agreed, saying that Kuwaitis know Saddam is a liar, because he also denied the existence of Kuwaiti POW's. It is "easier to hide WMD than POW's," he said. "We hope you

can prove this to the world," he added.

18. (C) Al-Anjari also gave his version of how the Iraqi situation will play out. "President Bush has decided Saddam should disarm, which means war," he said. On January 27, Hans Blix will give his initial report. On January 28, Israel will hold elections. The Hajj will occur the second week of February, then the moon will be full, "so you will not attack then." February 26 was the date of the Gulf War ceasefire, and that is when the U.S. will attack, to underscore that the reason is Saddam's violation of the ceasefire conditions.

#### Post-Saddam Concerns

19. (C) In talking about Iraq, Al-Anjari stressed that Kuwaitis were not concerned so much about a possible conflict, as the day after.8 PolChief assured him that the USG was working with the international community to ensure that the transition to a post-Saddam Iraq was peaceful and that Iraq maintains its territorial integrity. Al-Anjari reminded that Kuwait was still interested in ensuring it received war reparation payments. "Don,t forget about compensation," he said. "The passage of years should not equal forgiveness." That said, if principles were maintained, Kuwait would take steps to help the people of Iraq.

JONES